

India - Lithuania Relations

India has had close and friendly relations with Lithuania, reinforced by strong cultural connections. India recognized Lithuania (along with the other Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia) on 7th September 1991, after acceptance of their independence by the erstwhile USSR. Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25th February 1992.

Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi in July 2008, and has Honorary Consuls in Mumbai (*Shri Om Prakash Lohia*), Bengaluru (*Shri Kiron Shah*) and Kolkata (*Shri Arvind Sukhani*). Currently, our Ambassador in Warsaw is concurrently accredited to Lithuania and visits Vilnius frequently. The Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius (*Wing Cdr (Retd) Rajinder Chaudhary*), has been functioning since January 2015. (He earlier also served from 2007 to 2010).

The first political contact between India and independent Lithuania took place in June 1992, when the then Prime Minister of India Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, met Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, the first President of Lithuania, during the Rio Earth Summit.

Visits from India: MOS for Agriculture, Shri MohanbhaiKundariya visited Lithuania in October 2015 to unveil a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend Hermann Kallenbach. MOS for External Affairs Ms.Preneet Kaur visited Vilnius in March 2011. MoS Ms Preneet Kaur again visited Vilnius in June 2011 to attend a Ministerial meeting of 'the Community of Democracies'. Earlier visits from India include the following: Shri Salman Khurshid, MOS (External Affairs) in August 1995; Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS (External Affairs) in October , 2005 and Shri Anand Sharma, MOS (External Affairs) in March, 2007.

Visits from Lithuania: Foreign Minister of Lithuania Mr. LinasLinkevicius visited India to attend the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' meeting held in New Delhi from 11-12 November 2013. Mr. Linkevicius met EAM on the sidelines of ASEM FMM11 on 10 November 2013. The two Ministers signed an agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports. Earlier visits from Lithuania include (i) Prime Minister AdolfasSlezevicius's visit to New Delhi in September 1995. (ii) President ValdasAdamkus's state visit to India from in February 2001 (iii) Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. VygaudasUšackas's visit to India in December 2009.

Parliamentary exchanges: There have been three visits from the Lithuanian Parliament - the first in 1993 and the next in January 2003 when the Vice Chairman (Deputy Speaker) of the Seimas (Parliament) Mr. GintarasSteponavicius and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament Mr. GediminasKirkilas visited India to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Parliament. A Lithuanian Parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker Mr. AlgisKaseta visited India from in November, 2010. The *India Lithuania Forum* was inaugurated in the Lithuanian Parliament in September 2010. This was the result of the initiative taken by the Lithuanian Parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. This forum provides support to various NGOs, individuals and institutions that are interested in India to reinforce India's multi-faceted relationship encompassing culture, education, business and science.

Bilateral Agreements: The following bilateral agreements have been signed:

- Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation, signed in July 1993.

- Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the two Foreign Offices, signed in August 1995.
- Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services signed between Government of India and Government of Lithuania, signed in November 1999.
- Agreement on Air Services, signed on 20th February 2001.
- Agreement on Cooperation in Spheres of Culture, Science and Education, signed on 20th February 2001.
- Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, signed on 20th October 2001.
- Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA), signed in March, 2011.
- Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA), signed in July, 2011.
- Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic Passports, signed in November 2013.

Economic Relations

Major Indian exports to Lithuania include vegetable saps and extracts, fish fillets and other fish meat, medicaments, footwear, extracts, essences and concentrates of coffee, tea or mate, ferro-alloys, carpets, rice. Major Lithuanian exports to India include mineral or chemical fertilizers, potassic, dried leguminous vegetables, shelled, wadding of textile materials, nickel waster and scrap, diagnostic or laboratory reagents on backing, machzono-therapy appliances.

Bilateral trade figures for the last few years are given below:

(Figures in US\$ million)

Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
India's Exports	83	135	147	105	103
India's Imports	125	203	46	54	112
Total turnover	208	338	193	159	215

(Source: DGCIS)

An important development in the economic field has been the investment of about US\$ 200 million by Indorama, a Lohia Group company, from their Thailand branch, in the Klaipeda Economic Zone in a plant to manufacture plastic resin. This investment has given visibility to India in Lithuania.

Make in India Roadshow in Lithuania: India invited Lithuanian companies to take advantage of new and exciting opportunities for investment, at a *Make in India* roadshow organised by the Embassy of India and Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius in partnership with Confederation of Industrialists of Lithuania in Vilnius, on April 13, 2015. The roadshow saw participation by more than 30 business executives from leading Lithuanian companies, covering a wide range of sectors. Investors Forum of Lithuania, Baltic Institute of Corporate Governance, the Lithuanian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association and officials of the local Foreign Office also attended the meeting.

World Dairy Summit: Ms. RajniSekhriSibal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India visited Vilnius in September 2015 for the World Dairy

Conference in Vilnius. India, as the leading producer of dairy products made a significant contribution at the conference, where Ms Sibal was a keynote speaker.

India Baltic Chamber of Commerce (IBCC) was set up in 2009 and a business delegation of 22 members had accompanied the Foreign Minister of Lithuania in December 2009 to India.

ICEBF Bangalore: A Lithuanian business delegation led by the Indian Baltic Chamber of Commerce participated in 2nd India-Central Europe Business Forum organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI) on 5-6 October, 2015 in Bangalore. The company representatives had detailed business engagements with their Indian counterparts. The meeting focused on economic affairs and also on closer cooperation between the two countries in international bodies.

Cultural Relations:

Indology: Study of Indian languages (mainly Hindi and Sanskrit) has been carried out at the Vilnius University for several decades. A separate centre of Indian studies, under the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996. Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Rao Inderjit Singh had announced a grant of US\$ 10,000/ for promotion of Indian studies at the Centre of Oriental Studies of the Vilnius University in October 2005, and a language laboratory setup with this grant was inaugurated in February 2007. Vilnius University also hosted the 2nd Regional Conference of Central & Eastern Europe on Indian Studies (CEEIS) August 2006 under the auspices of ICCR.

Cultural affinities: Lithuanians have great interest in Indian cultural traditions, including Yoga. An estimated 70% Lithuanians visiting India have spiritual and yogic interests. There is special interest in Ayurveda. The Kaunas Ayurveda Centre arranges lectures on Ayurveda. The ISKCON Movement has a very active temple in Kaunas.

ICCR Chairs: In January 2011, the first ever ICCR Chair (long-term) of Indian Studies in the Baltic States was established based on the MoU signed between ICCR and the Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius). The visiting professor was with the University for two years - till June 2014. ICCR has signed an agreement with the Vilnius University in January 2015 for establishment of an ICCR Chair of Indian studies.

Romuva Community: A team of five scholars from Rajasthan, led by Major Surinder Mathur, visited Lithuania to participate in various events of the Romuva community of Lithuania in May 2015. They participated in a ceremony where Mslnija Trikuniene, a representative of the community, was anointed as 'high priestess'. ICCR proposes to organize a conference on India's linkages with Lithuania in the context of the Romuva community with participation of experts from India, Lithuania and other Baltic countries.

Yoga: The International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 18 Lithuanian cities. Despite heavy rains that washed out open air celebrations in the morning, hundreds of people came out to celebrate the event, not just in the capital city of Vilnius but in other cities as well, reaffirming the growing popularity of Indian philosophy and also yoga. At 1200 hours, all participants in all 18 towns gathered together to stand in the 'Tree asana' pose in order to send a green message.

Incredible Indian Roadshow: Ministry of Tourism with support of the Embassy organised a road show in Vilnius on July 07, 2015 inviting Lithuanian tourists and tour

operators to enjoy the richness and diversity of a resurgent India. Around 18 tour and travel operators from India participated in the event. Shri Girish Shankar, Additional Secretary from Ministry of Tourism, gave a multimedia presentation on tourist-friendly destinations of *Incredible India*. During the roadshows, the local Lithuanian tour operators had an opportunity to interact directly with tour operators from India and share thoughts, best practices, and trends to make future strategies.

Unveiling of Gandhi's sculpture: Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri MohanbhaiKundariya visited Lithuania for the unveiling of a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend Hermann Kallenbach. The sculpture was jointly unveiled by the PM of Lithuania and Minister of State for Agriculture Kundariya at Kallenbach's birthplace, Rusne on October 2, 2015.

ITEC:Under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme (ITEC), since 1993 over 400 Lithuanian nominees have attended various courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing etc. Around 65 seats are offered to Lithuanian each year, most of them are taken. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC programme.

Friendship Societies: There are two friendship societies, namely Indian Cultural and Information Centre (ICIC) [established in 2005], and Indian Lithuanian forum (ILF) Vilnius [established in 2010] are currently operational in Lithuania to promote Indian culture through performing arts, cinema, literature and festivals.

Visas: Visa services were outsourced from Sep 2010. There has been a surge in Lithuanian visa applications. 1625 visas were issued in the calendar year 2015.Lithuania was included in the e-TV scheme of Government of India effective from May 01, 2015. From May to December 2015, 600 Lithuanian nationals visited India on eTV. Thus, a total of 2225 visas were issued to Lithuanians in 2015.

Indian Community:

The Indian community comprises around 700 people, including students. Many came to the erstwhile USSR to study and stayed back due to marriage or business. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have come to Lithuania to work on IT projects. 15 Indian families work in the Klaipeda plant of the Lohia Group. The Indian yogic and New Age movements also bring their Indian teachers to work in Lithuania from time to time. The latest data shows that the number of Indian students studying full time in Lithuania has increased from 37 in 2011 to 357 in 2014 and exceeded the 600 mark in 2015.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Warsaw website:

<http://www.indembwarsaw.pl/>

Embassy of India, Warsaw Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/embassyofindiawarsaw>

Embassy of India, Warsaw, Twitter page:

twitter.com/@IndiaPoland
